Fraud Warning

Watch out for fake websites imitating the permit portal the County of San Mateo uses. Learn More

Urban Midcoast Building Permit Cap

San Mateo County's Local Coastal Program (LCP) caps urban Midcoast housing permits at an average of 40 units per year. In 2025, 102 units—mostly affordable—were permitted in the urban midcoast. As a result, the allowable building permits for 2026 and 2027 are significantly reduced. The County will continue accepting new planning permits, but cannot accept new building permit applications for housing in the urban Midcoast until 2028 or until the LCP is amended. Read More

Please Note

Per County Resolution No. 08075, Planning and Building permit fees are updated each year to reflect increases in service costs, based on the Consumer Price Index for the San Francisco–Oakland–Hayward area. A new fee schedule took effect on April 1, 2026. All permit applications submitted on or after April 1, 2026, will be charged under the new fee schedule. Access the updated fee schedules here.

Planning and Building

Use Permit

Approx. Time: **4-6 Months***

Approx. Fee: **$7,700-$14,000****

Forms

Non-Conforming Use Permit - Companion Page

Use Permit Application - Companion Page

Planning Permit Application Form

Environmental Information Disclosure Form

New Business Zoning Conformance Review Form

Regulations

Use Permit Regulations

Zoning Non-Conformities Regulations

Use Permits are required for the establishment of conditionally permitted uses or construction involving existing non-conforming parcels, structures, or uses when required by the Zoning Regulations.

Use Permits for Conditionally Permitted Uses

Use permits may be issued for conditionally permitted uses, as listed in the applicable zoning district. Once granted, these use permits often include an expiration date for the permit. The operator/property owner must apply for renewal of the use permit, which follows a similar process, at least 6 months prior to the permit's expiration.

Non-Conforming Use Permits

The County may grant a use permit at a public hearing to except any provision in Chapter 4 of the Zoning Regulations which restricts the continuation, enlargement, reestablishment, or replacement of a non-conforming use, structure, or situation. No use permit may be granted to exceed the maximum floor area, height, and parcel coverage for parcels located in the Midcoast.

See also:

- Use Permits for Telecommunications Facilities

Steps in the Planning Permit Process

If a planning or zoning permit is required, it generally needs to be processed prior to the application of a building or construction permit. The Planning Section of the Planning and Building Department processes these permits. When multiple permits are required (e.g., Coastal Development Permit and Design Review Permit), the longer permit processing time and higher level decision-making body would apply to the concurrent processing of

associated permits. In reviewing and processing your permit application, the assigned planner will generally complete the following steps:

1. Initial Application Review

The planner reviews your project to determine whether your application is complete. During this stage, the planner:

1. Determines whether your project conforms with the County's General Plan, Zoning Ordinance, and other regulations.
2. Solicits comments and recommendations from review agencies (relative to their regulations) and applicable homeowners associations or community groups.
3. Discusses your project with a development review committee of senior staff members.

The County has 30 days after receiving your application to notify you if you must provide any additional materials or information before your application can be processed.

2. Advisory Body Review

Advisory Body Review is required depending on the project location. A review by the North Fair Oaks Community Council is required for projects in North Fair Oaks. A review by the Midcoast Community Council is required for projects in the Midcoast.

3. Environmental Review

This review ensures that your project complies with the requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act and evaluates its potential impact on the environment; additional reports/information may be required to complete this review. If the project does not qualify for an exemption, an Initial Study/Negative Declaration must be prepared, additional fees are required, and an additional 2-3 months should be added to estimated permit processing times. For projects with complex or unmitigated environmental impacts, an Environmental Impact Report may be required, additional fees are required, and an additional 6 -12 months should be added to estimated permit processing times.

4. Public Notification

A public notice is mailed to owners of property within a 300-ft. radius of the subject property.

5. Permit Decision

A permit decision is made at a public hearing by the County Zoning Hearing Officer or Planning Commission. A public hearing allows the public to provide information, comments and suggestions on your project before the County makes a decision.

6. Appeal Period

Once a decision is made, both you and the public can appeal most permit decisions to a higher authority within 10 business days of the decision date. Staff-level and Zoning Hearing Officer decisions generally can be appealed to the Planning Commission. Planning Commission decisions can be appealed to the County Board of Supervisors. A

decision by the Board of Supervisors is not appealable.

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Approximated Time provides an estimated duration for processing of the specified permit only and does not include processing of any appeals. It is not intended to represent an exact timeframe for a specific project, which may be more or less than the time provided. Required permits and processing times vary depending on project complexity and location. For projects requiring multiple permits (e.g., Design Review Permit and Coastal Development Permit), please use the highest of the estimated times for each required permit. These times do not include processing times for non-Planning permits which may be required for the project, such as permits from the Building Inspection Section, Department of Public Works, Environmental Health Division, sewer or water districts, or state or federal agency. To obtain an estimated processing timeframe for a specific project, please call or visit the Current Planning Section and speak with a Planner to identify the required permits and reviews for your project.

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Approximated Fees provide an estimated rounded fee total based on the permit fee and other anticipated review costs of the adopted Planning Service Fee Schedule and does not represent an exact fee amount for a specific project, which may be higher or lower than the fee provided. Required permits and fees vary depending on project complexity and location. For projects requiring multiple permits (e.g., Design Review Permit and Coastal Development Permit), please use the highest of the estimated permit fees and add on the established fees of other required permits from the Planning Service Fee Schedule, to obtain an estimated fee total. Other department review fees, including those of the Geotechnical Section, Department of Public Works, Environmental Health Division, and the applicable fire department, may also apply. To obtain an estimated fee total for a specific project, please call or visit the Current Planning Section and speak with a Planner to identify the required permits and reviews for your project.

500 County Center
Redwood City, CA 94063
(650) 363-4000

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